

Remarks

This is in response to the non-final Office Action mailed on August 26, 2004. Favorable consideration is respectfully requested in view of the previous amendments and following remarks. Claims 25, 26, and 41-43 remain pending.

In the Office Action, restriction was required under 35 U.S.C. § 121 between Group I (claims 1-24 and 27-40) directed to couplers and Group II (claims 25, 26, and 41-43) directed to methods. The restriction requirement is respectfully traversed.

Preliminarily, it is respectfully noted that claims 1-24, 39, and 40 were canceled by preliminary amendment filed with the application. Therefore, it is presumed that the groups are as follows:

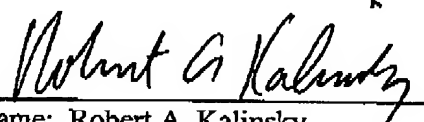
- Group I - claims 27-38 directed to couplers; and
- Group II - claims 25, 26, and 41-43 directed to methods.

Applicants respectfully elect Group II, including claims 25, 26, and 41-43. Claims 27-38 of Group I have been canceled without prejudice as to their future prosecution.

Favorable consideration is respectfully requested. The Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney with any questions regarding this application.

Respectfully submitted,
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